

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

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R 121606Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2516

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY COTONOU

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LOME

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY OUAGADOUGOU

DIA WASHDC

CINCEUR VAIHINGEN GERMANY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ACCRA 823

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS GH

SUBJ: CLOSURE OF GHANA'S UNIVERSITIES

REF: ACCRA 802

1. SUMMARY: UNIVERSITY CAMPUSES QUIET AND DEVOID OF RESIDENT STUDENTS TODAY. UNIVERSITIES WILL PROBABLY REOPEN SOON, BUT STUDENTS WILL BE RE-ADMITTED ONLY ON APPLICATION AND AFTER SIGNED UNDERTAKING TO BEHAVE. GOVERNMENT-OWNED "GHANAIAI TIMES" PROFESSES TO SEE A FOREIGN CONSPIRACY BEHIND DEMONSTRATIONS. ACTUAL CAUSE, THE VICIOUS DRILLING OF A STUDENT, IS AN EXAMPLE OF MILITARY'S SOMETIMES CALLOUS TREATMENT OF CIVILIANS. NRC'S REACTION IS A REFLECTION OF GOVERNMENT'S SENSITIVITY TO CRITICISM OF MILITARY RULE AND A CONTINUING PREOCCUPATION WITH INTERNAL SECURITY. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY TO GUAGE ULTIMATE STUDENT REACTION, CONFIDENTIAL

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MILITARY/STUDENT RELATIONS HAVE BEEN SUBJECTED SEVERE JOLT.

END SUMMARY.

2. GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ORDERING COUNTRY'S THREE UNIVERSITIES CLOSED CLAIMED ACTION NECESSARY BECAUSE OF "UNRULY DEMONSTRATIONS" AND REFUSAL STUDENTS TO "LISTEN TOMEMBERS OF NRC WHO URGED THEM SUBMIT THEIR GRIEVANCES FOR REDRESS." (CHIEF DEFENSE STAFF ASHLEY-LASSEN DID NOT RPT NOT RECEIVE STUDENT DELEGATION YESTERDAY AS REPORTED REFTEL; HE OFFERED TO SEE DELEGATION BUT WAS REBUFFED BY STUDENTS.)

3. ACCORDING NRC STATEMENT, DEMONSTRATIONS RESULT OF MILITARY DRILLING OF A STUDENT AT HO. OFFICIALS PRIVATELY INSIST STUDENT WAS NOT BEATEN OR ARRESTED BUT ADMIT THE DRILLING HE RECEIVED WAS VICIOUS, THAT STUDENT CALLAPSED AND HAD TO BE TAKEN TO HOSPITAL. ACCORDING THESE SOURCES, STUDENT HAD TAUNTED SOLDIERS WHO WERE DRILLING OTHER CIVILIANS. AFTER STUDENT RETURNED LEGON ON SATURDAY AND TOLD THIS STORY, STUDENT DELEGATIONS WERE DISPATC- HED TO UNIVERSITIES CAPE COAST AND KUMASI, WHERE THEY SUCCESSFULLY ENLISTED SUPPORT FOR COUNTRY-WIDE DEMONSTRATION YESTERDAY. APPARENTLY, MILITARY ATTEMPTED THROUGHOUT WEEKEND AVERT DEMONSTRATIONS DURING UNSUCCESSFUL NEGOTIATIONS WITH STUDENTS.

4. ALTHOUGH DEMONSTRATIONS TOOK PLACE AT ALL THREE UNIVERSITIES YESTERDAY, NUMBER OF STUDENTS INVOLVED APPARENTLY SMALL, AT LEAST AT LEGON IN ACCRA WHERE NUMBER ESTIMATED AT ONLY 150 TO 200. MANY STUDENTS AND INSTRUCTORS UNAWARE OF ANY TROUBLE UNTIL STUDENTS ORDERED OFF CAMPUS BY 8:00 P.M. LAST NIGHT. ONE NATIONAL PAPER RE- PORTS TODAY THAT SOME SCUFFLES INJURED THIRTY STUDENTS AT CAPE COAST, OF WHOM SIX ADMITTED TO HOSPITAL. STUDENT CLAIMS OF SHOOT- INGS UNCONFIRMED. CERTAINLY, MILITARY OFFICIALS HOTLY DENY ANY MIS- TREATMENT AND ASSERT SOLDIERS GIVEN STRICT INSTRUCTIONS NOT TO INJURE OR MALTREAT STUDENTS. (AT LEGON THESE ORDERS APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN FOLLOWED SCRUPULOUSLY.)

5. SITUATION QUIET THIS MORNING. GOVERNMENT WILL READMIT STUDENTS ONLY UPON APPLICATION AND PROVICED THEY SIGN UNDERTAKING TO BE "OF GOOD BEHAVIOR." GOVERNMENT APPARENTLY INTENDS ALLOW UNIVERSI- TIES REOPEN IN NEAR FUTURE, FOLLOWING SUBMISSION OF PETITION TO NRC FROM STUDENTS. (PETITION NO DOUBT TO INCLUDE APPROPRIATE EX- PRESSION OF REGRET AND SUPPORT FOR GOVERNMENT.)

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6. PRESS, RADIO AND TV ALL COVERED STORY, BUT NO RPT NO PICTURES OF ARMED TROOPS OR DEMONSTRATORS CARRIED BY TV NEWS OR GOVERNMENT PRESS. STORY REPORTING APOLOGY OF NATIONAL UNION OF NIGERIAN STUDEN- TS TO FEDERAL MILITARY GOVERNMENT CARRIED ALONGSIDE PRESS COVER- AGE GHANAIAN DEMONSTRATIONS AND IMMEDIATELY AFTER RADIO AND TV ACCOUNTS.

7. GOVERNMENT STATEMENT AND GOVERNMENT-OWNED PRESS STRESS NRC PAST WILLINGNESS COOPERATE WITH STUDENTS AND STUDENT SUPPORT FOR NRC'S REVOLUTION. STATEMENT ADDS, HOWEVER, THAT GOVERNMENT CANNOT TOLERATE ACTS OF LAWLESSNESS AND VANDALISM, WHICH ARE NOT IN TUNE WITH THE REVOLUTIONARY SPIRIT OF BUILDING A NEW GHANA. "GHANAIAAN TIMES," CLAIMING FORCES OF REACTION AT WORK, EDITORIALY CHARGED FOREIGNERS ENGINEERED THE DEMONSTRATIONS. EDITORIAL SAID STUDENT ACTION WENT FAR BEYOND BOUNDS OF WHAT STUDENTS CLAIMED BE THEIR COMPLAINTS AND THAT DEMONSTRATIONS WERE "...CULMINATION OF A DEEP-SEATED CONSPIRACY HATCHED FROM ABROAD AND QUIETLY AND CUNNINGLY NURTURED AT LEGON BY THE PROPONENTS OF RECONCILIATION (READ PROGRESS PARTY ADHERENTS) WHO ARE HIDING BEHIND THE SMOKESCREEN OF ACADEMIC FREEDOM." PAPER ALLEGED THAT AS LONG AS THE AGENTS OF PRINCIPALS IN LONDON OR PARIS (READ BUSIA) ENJOY SANCTUARY OF THE UNIVERSITY THERE WILL "... BE NO END TO THE TROUBLES THAT CAN ERUPT FROM THESE." IN SOMEWHAT TORTURED REASONING, "DAILY GRAPHIC" URGED GOVERNMENT TO DELVE INTO STUDENT GRIEVANCES WITH "AIM OF FINDING OTHER HIDDEN MOTIVES, IF ANY, BEHIND THE SPONTANEOUS DEMONSTRATIONS."

8. COMMENT: FOR MOMENT ALL IS QUIET. FOR ITS PART, NRC HAS DEMONSTRATED IN AS CLEAR A WAY AS POSSIBLE ITS DETERMINATION KEEP PRESSURE GROUPS UNDER CONTROL AND PREVENT PUBLIC CRITICISM OF MILITARY RULE (AS DISTINCT FROM QUESTIONING OF GOVERNMENT POLICIES.) GOVERNMENT'S SHOW OF FORCE APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN AN OVERREACTION. STUDENTS WERE NOT DEMONSTRATING AGAINST GOVERNMENT BUT AGAINST MILITARY TREATMENT OF ONE STUDENT. OVERREACTION STEMS NOT ONLY FROM SENSITIVITY TO CRITICISM BUT FROM NRC'S CONTINUING OBSESSION WITH INTERNAL SECURITY AND POSSIBLE THREATS TO ITS POSITION. MILITARY OFFICIALS TOLD DATT THAT NRC DETERMINED AVOID STUDENT/GOVERNMENT CONFRONTATIONS AS HAVE OCCURRED IN NIGERIA AND ZAIRE. STUDENTS, AS LABOR UNIONS BEFORE THEM, HAVE DISCOVERED THERE ARE LIMITS ON INDEPENDENT ACTION. WHILE IT IS TOO EARLY GUAGE ULTIMATE STUDENT

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REACTION TO YESTERDAY'S EVENTS, IT SEEMS QUITE CLEAR THAT STUDENT/MILITARY RELATIONSHIP HAS NEITHER BEEN STRENGTHENED NOR IMPROVED. THE INCIDENT AT HO PROVIDES ANOTHER EXAMPLE OF MILITARY CALLOUSNESS IN ITS SOMETIMES ROUGH AND HIGH-HANDED DEALINGS WITH CIVILIANS. WHILE NO APIARENT POLITICAL MOTIVATION OTHER THAN CRITICISM OF MILITARY MISTREATMENT OF A STUDENT CAN BE ASCRIBED TO DEMONSTRATION ITSELF, CASE AND SPEED WITH WHICH DEMONSTRATIONS ORGANIZED AND FACT THAT A STUDENT PUBLICLY TAUNTED AND CRITICIZED MILITARY PERSONNEL MAY BE A REFLECTION OF A DEEPER STUDENT DISENCHANTMENT WITH THE NRC AND ITS REVOLUTION. BUT STUDENTS' POSITION IN POWER STRUCTURE OF TODAY'S GHANA IS MINIMAL.

HADSEL

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